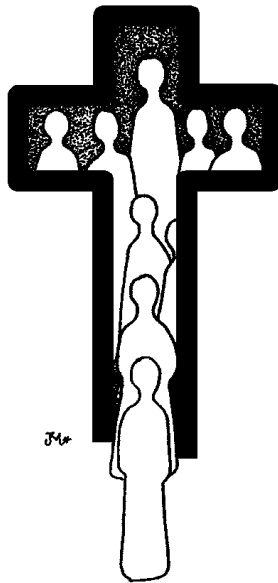


# Pastoral Council Faith Sharing Sessions September - November 2017

## Cycle A



## AN INVITATION TO PRAY WITH YOUR PASTORAL COUNCIL

**Begin and end with prayer!!** These opening and closing prayers have been prepared to help your pastoral council become what it is intended to be: a *leadership body* in *communion* with God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—focused on enabling the community to carry out the *mission* of the Church. As stated in the “Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines” of the Diocese of Rochester, the specific purposes of the pastoral council, in harmony with the goals of the Pastor, are:

- to develop a common vision and purpose, actively advocate for the poor and the powerless, and to extend Christian commitment to the surrounding neighborhoods and communities;
- to orchestrate a statement of mission for the parish community and become the reference point for activity in the parish;
- to provide recommendations for priorities, directions, and policies through pastoral planning for worship, evangelization, outreach, stewardship, etc.;
- to promote communication, understanding, and collaboration among parish organizations and between the parish, the diocese, and the universal Church.

In our enthusiasm to “get the business of the council done” we may forget that we are to role model spiritual leadership. As a pastoral council, we are challenged to ongoing renewal through prayer, study, listening, and dialogue. Because of our familiarity with secular boards of directors, we may forget that we are a body of church leaders engaged with our pastor or pastoral administrator in discerning the ways God is speaking to this community in this time and place. For our actions to be imbued with the wisdom of God, they must begin with prayer, with listening to one another in faith and love, followed by listening to the larger community of parishioners in similar faith and love.

We strongly encourage you to set aside time at the beginning and end of your pastoral council meetings to pray. These prayers are a tool used by many councils and other groups. We are confident that the quality of your decisions as well as your relationships with one another and the faith community at large will be enhanced as you take time for shared prayer in God’s presence.

**Betsy McDermott**  
**Liaison for Pastoral Councils**  
**Pastoral Services, Diocese of Rochester**

## HINTS FOR THE PRAYER LEADER

We recommend designating a different person on your council to lead prayer for each meeting.

### **Preparation before the Pastoral Council meeting**

1. Read through the prayer session for the Sunday following your meeting. Become familiar with it.
2. Make enough copies of the prayer for all you expect to attend the meeting. You may distribute these at the beginning of the meeting or send them out to members ahead of time along with the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting.
3. If a visual image is suggested for this particular prayer session, bring it to the meeting if possible. Having an image in the center of the gathering will help members remember throughout the evening that the meeting unfolds in God's presence.

### **A Walk through the Prayer Outline**

#### ***Prayer at the beginning of the meeting (allow 10-15 minutes on your agenda):***

1. Invite those present to become quiet and remember that they are in the presence of God. After a brief pause, begin the ***Invitation to Prayer***.
2. Either read the ***Scripture*** passage yourself or have someone else do so (ask them before the meeting begins).
3. Allow several minutes for ***silent reflection*** and consideration of the faith sharing questions.
4. Invite those present to respond (in groups of two or three or in the larger council group) to any of the suggested ***questions for faith sharing*** out loud. People may also choose to share how the reading spoke to them in general. All do not need to respond but allow silent pauses so that people can reflect comfortably.
5. Go on to the beginning of your meeting's agenda.

#### ***Prayer at the end of the meeting (allow 5 minutes on your agenda):***

1. Begin the ***intercessory prayers*** as written in the prayer session.
2. Invite others to share their own prayers aloud.
3. When all who choose to share prayers are done, say "For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts."
4. Begin the ***closing prayer***.

### Notes

1. The intercessory prayers may be moved to the end of the "prayer at the beginning of the meeting" or offered in the middle of the meeting—as well as at the end.
2. Some communities like to develop one intercessory prayer relative to the issues on which the pastoral council is working. This prayer is prayed by the entire community at Sunday liturgies over the course of the month. This practice provides spiritual support for the parish's leadership, helps the entire congregation to be conscious of issues under consideration by the pastoral council, and helps all to focus on the God who leads the community into the future.
3. These prayer sessions, while designed for pastoral councils, can be used at the meetings of the parish staff, other parish committees, and the planning group council with minor adaptation.

## ***Faith Sharing Guidelines***

Each person is led by God on his or her personal spiritual journey. Faith sharing refers to shared reflections on the action of God in one's experience as related to Scripture and faith. Faith sharing is not discussion, problem solving, or scripture study. The purpose is an encounter, between a person in the concrete circumstances of life and the Word of God, which leads to a conversion of heart. The entire faith sharing process is seen as prayer, i.e. listening to the Word of God as revealed in scripture and in each other's experience.

1. Participants are given time to reflect before sharing begins, and a period of comfortable silence might occur between individuals sharing. Silence is a vital part of the total process of faith sharing.
2. Sharing is optional. Each person shares at the time and on the level where he or she feels comfortable.
3. There is no set order for sharing (you do not need to go in a circle around the group).
4. Listen respectfully and openly. If someone does not hear the sharing or does not understand, he or she can ask for clarification.
5. There is no discussion or commenting on what is shared. An appropriate response from the prayer leader or group might be a smile, a nod, or a "thank you."
6. The prayer leader and group are not there as "problem solvers" or "advice givers."
7. Participants are encouraged to share in the first person (I feel...I believe...etc.).
8. Anything that is shared in the group is confidential and does not leave the group. It is meant to be a gift for this group only.

**Living God's Will**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**September 3, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: We begin this new academic year with hearts that seek to please God and follow His path for us as a people of faith.

**All: Keep our hearts open to new opportunities as we discern your will.**

***Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2***

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

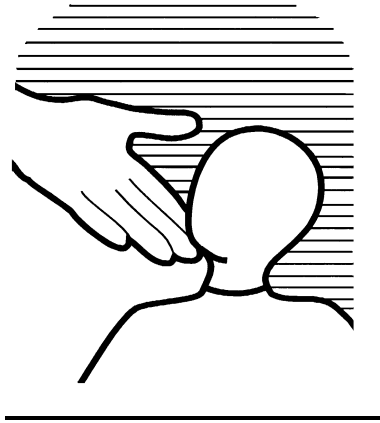
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Silent reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing***

We can “offer our bodies” – mind, energy, time, creativity, good humor... -- every time we get up in the morning, greet our loved ones, go off to work, and live our daily responsibilities.

1. What connection is there between offering our bodies as part of our spiritual worship and discerning the will of God?
2. What resources do I use to better discern God's will in my daily life?
3. How can we as a pastoral council discern God's will for our parish community?



## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: Sometimes it seems that our faith exists only in our minds and words.  
Help us find new and practical ways to live our commitment to your will,  
we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: God of our ancestors, help us be faithful to the task of handing on the faith  
to future generations, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: You give us the choice to be light or darkness for one another. Help us to  
choose generosity over selfishness, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...  
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

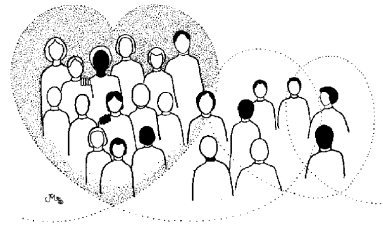
**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

Leader: Lord, we trust that your Spirit of Wisdom has guided our deliberations this  
night and will continue to guide us "into a future full of hope." Help us to  
discern your guidance and discover your will in every facet of our lives.

**All: We pray through Jesus, the perfect reflection of the Father's will,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.**

**Becoming a People of Love**  
**23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time,**  
**Cycle A**  
**September 10, 2017**



**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader:        Holy God,  
                 out of love, you created us and our world.  
                 In love and mercy, you redeemed us in Jesus, Loving Word made flesh.  
                 With patience and love, you remain with us  
                 and sanctify us through your Holy Spirit.  
                 Help us to be your people,  
                 people whose lives are lived in loving service to all.  
                 We ask this, as we ask all things, through your Son, Jesus Christ.

**All:            Amen.**

***Scripture Reading: Romans 13:8-10***

Owe nothing to anyone, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; you shall not kill; you shall not steal; you shall not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this saying, namely "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Love does no evil to the neighbor; hence, love is the fulfillment of the law.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Silent Reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing (please choose one or two for faith sharing)***

1. *It is not enough simply not to do something evil to another. Christ calls us to actively love each other. Are there times when a loving action has brought you closer to another?*
2. *Are there times when such an action has been extended to a person you found difficult? What happened?*
3. *How can we, as a Pastoral Council, lead our people to love one another with concrete actions—not just pious words?*

**Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### *Intercessory Prayers*

Leader: As people of love, let us present God with the prayers and concerns of our hearts.

For our church, that we might set aside petty divisions and become a people that truly loves and serves each other and our world, we pray...

**All: God of love, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For the peoples of the world, that we may put love into action by providing decent housing, adequate health care, and solid education for all, we pray...

**All: God of love, hear our prayer.**

(Leader may add or invite prayers that address the concerns dealt with in this meeting.)

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose to share are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts, we pray:

**All: God of love, hear our prayer.**

### *Closing Prayer*

Leader: May love be in your eyes so that you see Christ in all you meet.

**All: May love be on your lips, so that you speak gently and kindly.**

Leader: May love be in your ears, so that you may listen to others with patience.

**All: May love be in your hands, so that you may work steadfastly for others.**

Leader: May love be in your feet, so that you may go wherever you are needed.

**All: And may love be in your mind and heart, so that you may know Love and be Love for the world. Amen.**



**Forgiveness, Mercy and Justice**  
**24<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**September 17, 2017**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: Let us become aware of the life that is ours through the suffering of Jesus  
in loving us to death, death on the cross. (Pause for a moment of silence.)

***Scripture Reading: Sirach 27:30 – 28:7***

Wrath and anger are hateful things,  
yet the sinner hugs them tight.  
The vengeful will suffer the Lord's vengeance,  
for he remembers their sins in detail.  
Forgive your neighbor's injustice;  
then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven.  
Could anyone nourish anger against another  
and expect healing from the Lord?  
Could anyone refuse mercy to another like himself,  
and seek pardon for his own sins?  
If one who is but flesh cherishes wrath,  
who will forgive his sins?  
Remember your last days, set enmity aside;  
remember death and decay, and cease from sin!  
Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor;  
remember the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Silent Reflection***

***Question for Faith Sharing***

1. *Where do we "hug tight" anger and unforgiveness?*
2. *What happens when we forgive our neighbor?*
3. *How can we as a pastoral council help foster a culture of forgiveness and healing in our community?*

## **Prayer at the End of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayer***

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.

That we might imitate Christ our Savior and learn to forgive as he forgave,  
we pray:

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

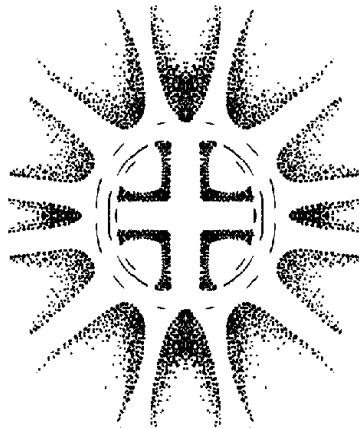
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts, we pray:

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer:***

**All: Shield of the fearful,  
Source of hope,  
as we mourn the sudden violence  
and the deaths of our brothers and sisters,  
show us the immense power of your goodness  
and strengthen our faith.  
Come swiftly to our aid,  
and have mercy on all who call on you.  
Comfort those who mourn this day  
and gather the dead in your mercy.  
Bring to us at last the peace  
you promise in Jesus Christ  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.**

<http://www.beliefnet.com>



**God's Limitless Goodness**  
**25<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**September 24, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Preparation:*** *The Scripture passage is a familiar one. Take this opportunity, outside of a liturgical setting, to give it fresh life and proclaim it as a good story, full of drama, spoken in several and varied voices. In advance of the meeting, the leader asks 1-3 others to take the parts of the landowner and storytellers and to practice reading them with inflection and meaningful timing. There are two storyteller roles to help distinguish and move from one scene to the next. (Remind whoever takes this role, male or female, that in this passage Jesus is the storyteller.) If these parts need to be consolidated into one, make sure the reader pauses in between to emphasize the move to a new scene in the story. The leader has the opening line, but may also take another role if need be.*

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: Let us pray...O Gracious God,  
Women: You are more generous than we could ever imagine.  
Men: Your goodness is deeper than our human hearts can fathom.  
Women: Help us move beyond the confines of our limits.  
Men: Prepare us to receive your holy Word.  
**All: Amen.**

***Scripture Reading: Matthew 20:1-15***

*The leader explains that tonight everyone will be involved in this Scripture reading and names the role that each will play. When all are clear as to what is happening next and what is expected of them, the leader sets the stage, inviting them to silently recall an unfair experience. After a moment the leader begins the reading:*

Leader: Jesus told his disciples this parable:

**1<sup>st</sup> Storyteller:** The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out at dawn to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with them for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Storyteller:** Going out about nine o'clock, the landowner saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them,

**The Landowner:** You too go into my vineyard, and I will give you what is just.

**1<sup>st</sup> Storyteller:** So they went off.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Storyteller:** And he went out again around noon, and around three o'clock, and did likewise.

**1<sup>st</sup> Storyteller:** Going out about five o'clock, the landowner found others standing around, and said to them,

**The Landowner:** Why do you stand here idle all day?

**Men (the Last):** Because no one has hired us.

**The Landowner:** You too go into my vineyard.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Storyteller:** When it was evening the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman,

**The Landowner:** Summon the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and ending with the first.

**1<sup>st</sup> Storyteller:** When those who had started about five o'clock came, each received the usual wage.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Storyteller:** So when the first came, they thought that they would receive more, but each of them also got the usual wage. And on receiving it they grumbled against the landowner, saying,

**Women (the First):** These last ones worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us, who bore the day's burden and the heat.

**The Landowner:** My friend, I am not cheating you. Did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what is yours and go. What if I wish to give this last one the same as you? Or am I not free to do as I wish with my own money? Are you envious because I am generous?

### *Silent Reflection*

### *Questions for Faith Sharing*

1. What about this gospel story moved me?
2. God's generosity is outrageous by our standards of fairness. Do I sense I am being called to enlarge my heart and spirit in some particular way?
3. In what ways can our community broaden its perspective or expand its horizons in order to better exemplify the gospel message of God's amazingly generous nature?

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### *Intercessory Prayers*

Leader: Almighty God, you put in us a spark of your divine love.  
Help us to live our lives inspired by your love.

**All: Lord, grant us your mercy.**

Leader: Christ Jesus, throughout your ministry you taught us the way to love.  
In an outrageous act of love, in your Passion, Death and Resurrection, you freed us from sin so we could love again. Help us live lives of gratitude.

**All: Lord, grant us your mercy.**

Leader: Holy God, you pour out your Spirit upon us  
and we are strengthened in love.  
Help us to live lives of generosity.

**All: Lord, grant us your mercy.**

Leader: For what else shall we pray...  
(When all who choose are finished voicing prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: Lord, grant us your mercy.**

### *Closing Prayer*

Leader: O God, come to our assistance.

**All: Lord, make haste to help us.**

**Hear God Speaking**  
**26<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**October 1, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

*Invitation to Prayer*

**All: Gracious God, give us ears to hear your call to us. Sharpen our senses to recognize you in the circumstances of our daily life and to follow where you lead us.**

*Scripture Reading: Matthew 21:28-32*

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people:  
“What is your opinion?  
A man had two sons. He came to the first and said,  
‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’  
He said in reply, ‘I will not,’  
But afterwards changed his mind and went.  
The man came to the other son and gave the same order.  
He said in reply, ‘Yes, sir,’ but did not go.  
Which of the two did his father’s will?”  
They answered, “The first.”

Jesus said to them, “Amen, I say to you,  
tax collectors and prostitutes  
are entering the kingdom of God before you.  
When John came to you in the way of righteousness,  
you did not believe him;  
but tax collectors and prostitutes did.  
Yet even when you saw that,  
you did not later change your minds and believe him.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Silent Reflection*

*Questions for Faith Sharing*

1. When have you said no and then thought better of it and said YES?
2. As leaders within our community this year, what are we saying yes to?

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: Lord, protect and guide your people as we strive to bring peace and justice to our communities...

**All: Lord, hear us.**

Leader: Lord, strengthen those who struggle to follow your call...

**All: Lord, hear us.**

Leader: Lord, give us courage to listen and say YES to your way for us...

**All: Lord, hear us.**

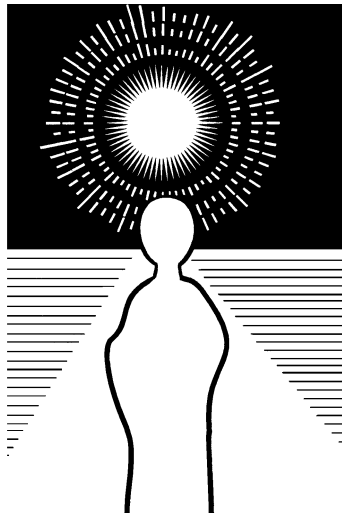
Leader: For what else shall we pray...

*(When all who choose are finished voicing prayers)*  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: Lord, hear us.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

**All: May we hear the Shepherd's voice and follow it boldly. Amen.**



**Peace Be With You**  
**27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**October 8, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

*Invitation to prayer*

**All: Lord God, giver of peace and healer of souls, may your peace be upon us as we gather this night.**

*Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:6-9*

Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions and gratitude. Then God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, your thoughts should wholly be directed to all that is true, all that deserves respect, all that is honest, pure, admirable, decent, virtuous, or worthy of praise. Live according to what you have learned and accepted, what you have heard me say and seen me do. Then will the God of peace be with you.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**



*Silent Reflection*

*Questions for Faith Sharing*

1. How well does our parish or cluster pray together? Does prayer happen outside of Mass?
2. What virtues from the list in Philippians does the Council demonstrate? Are there any that are lacking? Where do these virtues begin?

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: In confidence, we now offer God our prayers and our needs.

For all who serve others in any capacity, that they do so humbly and with loving kindness, we pray to the Lord.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

**All: Good and gracious God, in you we seek the peace that passes all understanding to stand guard over our minds and our hearts. Be with us as we journey together in building up your Church. Fill our thoughts with the virtues of love, kindness, and respect. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, your only Son, our Lord. Amen.**



**God's Vision, God's Promise to Us**  
**28<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**October 15, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: Be still and aware of God's presence within and all around...

***Scripture Reading: Excerpt from Isaiah 25:6-10***

On this mountain, the Lord of hosts  
will provide for all peoples  
a feast of rich food and choice wines,  
juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.

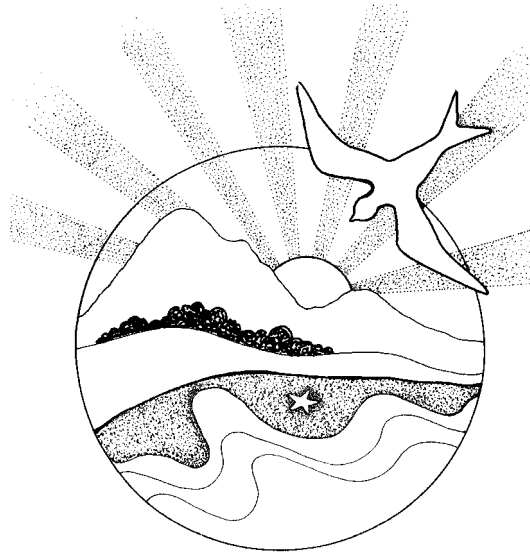
On this mountain, he will destroy  
the veil that veils all peoples,  
the web that is woven over all nations;  
he will destroy death forever.  
The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face;  
the reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth;  
for the Lord has spoken.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Silent Reflection***

***Question for Faith Sharing***

1. Which part of this portrayal of God's intentions for us and all people speaks most powerfully to you right now?
2. What encouragement or consolation can we find in this passage for our parish?



## **Prayer at the End of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: For all those who are suffering and in tears tonight:

**All: God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: God of mercy, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

**All: May the grace of the night's stillness be mine.  
May the grace of the moon's guidance be mine.  
May the grace of heaven's vastness be mine  
to renew my soul in sleep  
until the morning angels awaken me.  
Amen.**

**Chosen by God**  
**29<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**October 22, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

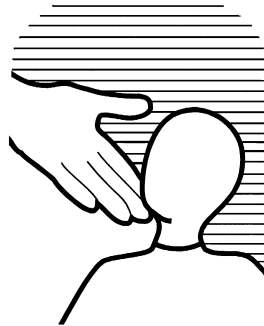
Leader: We are the chosen ones of God – chosen to receive the gift of life,  
chosen to receive the gift of faith,  
chosen in our baptism to be disciples of Jesus  
in the midst of all the complexities and challenges of today's world.

***Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5***

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; grace to you and peace.

We give thanks to God always for all of you, remembering you in our prayers, unceasingly calling to mind your work of faith and labor of love and endurance in hope of our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father, knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God, how you were chosen. For our gospel did not come to you in word alone, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much conviction.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**



***Silent reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing***

One of the most affirming experiences of life is to “be chosen”-- for a team, a job, a promotion, as a spouse, for an important task that serves the community, etc.

1. How did you feel when first selected (by God and by parishioners or the pastor/pastoral administrator) for service on the Pastoral Council? How do you feel about it now?
2. In what other aspects of your life do you feel called by God?

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: O God, you share your life with us through the talents you give us.  
Make us responsible stewards of these gifts, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Jesus, you knew the vulnerability of your disciples.  
Guide and protect your Church, all who minister to your people  
and all who suffer from addictions of any kind, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is courage. May this gift strengthen us  
to live God's will with determination and conviction, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Your Spirit dwells in us, forming us in love. Help us to remember that  
you are at work in us, bringing love to a broken world, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

### **Closing Prayer**

**All: Lord Christ, you have no body on earth but ours,  
no hands but ours, no feet but ours.  
Ours are the eyes through which your compassion  
must look out on the world.  
Ours are the feet by which you may still go about doing good.  
Ours are the hands with which you bless people now.  
Bless our minds and bodies, that we may be blessing to others. Amen**

St. Theresa of Avila

**Loving God with All our Being**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**October 29, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

**Invitation to Prayer**

Leader: Gracious and loving God, teach us how to live out your Great Commandment. We pray for a deeper understanding of what it means to love You with all our heart, soul and mind, love our neighbor and love ourselves. Help us to be the community known for its abundant love. We ask this as we ask all things, through your Son Jesus Christ.

All: Amen.

***Scripture Reading: Matthew 22:34-40***

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them--a scholar of the law--tested him by asking, "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?"

He said to him, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

***Silent Reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing***

1. How do you love the Lord, your God, "all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind? When recently have you seen an example of this kind of love in the faith community?
2. Who are the "neighbors" of our parish community? How is this parish or cluster being called to show love for our neighbors?
3. How can we, as Church, be a more visible example of people living out this Great commandment in this coming year?

## Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

### *Intercessory Prayers*

Leader: Let us bring our meeting to a close by thanking God for this time together and asking for God's help for ourselves and all who are in need.

For our church, that we might love our God, with one heart, soul, and mind...and that we might love our neighbors as ourselves, we pray.

**All: Gracious God, teach us to love.**

Leader: For all nations, that we might place ourselves in loving service to each other in order to bring about the justice and peace of the kingdom of God, we pray.

**All: Gracious God, teach us to love.**

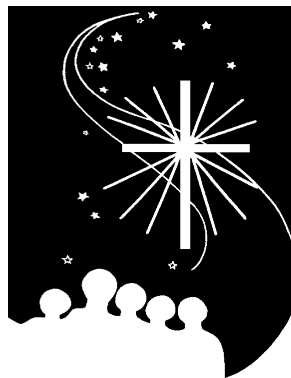
(Leader may add or invite prayers that address the concerns dealt with in this meeting.)

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...  
(When all who choose to share are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts, we pray:

**All: Gracious God, teach us to love.**

### *Closing Prayer*

**All: Loving and compassionate God,  
Touch our hearts that we might love you without reserve,  
our souls that we might remain fervent in our faith,  
and our minds that we might seek to know you.  
Teach us to love and serve our neighbors  
and to be grateful for the gift of being your sons and daughters.  
Guide us and protect us always...  
We ask this in the name of the Father, the Son  
and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**



**Proclaiming the Gospel**  
**31<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**November 5, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**  
**Invitation to Prayer**

Leader: Be still and aware of God's presence within and all around...

***Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13***

Brothers and sisters:

We were gentle among you, as a nursing mother cares for her children.  
With such affection for you, we were determined to share with you  
not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well,  
so dearly beloved had you become to us.  
You recall, brothers and sisters, our toil and drudgery.  
Working night and day in order not to burden any of you,  
we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.

And for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly,  
that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us,  
you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God,  
which is now at work in you who believe.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Silent Reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing***

1. St. Paul was one of the first evangelizers, bringing the good news to both Jews and gentiles. Which of his traits, as described in this passage, do you think are particularly important for us today as we seek to proclaim the gospel in our families, our communities, and the larger world? Why?
2. Who, in your own life, has been particularly important in bringing you to faith in Christ? How did he or she share the good news with you?

## Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

### *Intercessory Prayers*

Leader: For those searching for truth and meaning in their lives,

**All: Gracious God, teach us to share your good news.**

Leader: For our community, that we might proclaim the gospel by our actions and our words,

**All: Gracious God, teach us to share your good news.**

(Leader may add or invite prayers that address the concerns dealt with in this meeting.)

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

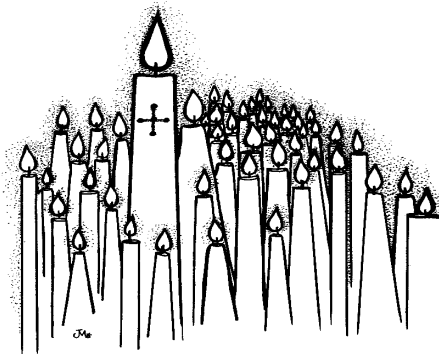
(When all who choose to share are finished offering prayers)

For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts, we pray:

**All: Gracious God, teach us to share your good news.**

### *Closing Prayer*

**All: Loving and compassionate God,  
Give us hearts that long to reach out to others with the love and  
compassion we have received from you. Fill our souls with boldness.  
Thank you for the gift of being your sons and daughters.  
Guide us and protect us always...  
We ask this in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.**





**Building the Church**  
**Dedication of the Lateran Basilica**  
**November 9, 2017**

UNLESS GOD BUILDS  
THE HOUSE  
THEY  
LABOR  
IN  
VAIN.

PSALM 127



**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: Gracious God, bless this Council tonight.  
Bless your people, the Church at \_\_\_\_\_ (*parish name*)  
We are the body of Christ; we want to grow in Christ in every way.  
Each part, working properly, promoting the body's growth,  
building itself up in love. Bless each part.  
Join and knit us together--one body and one Spirit, one Lord of all.  
We ask these things in Jesus' name.

**All: Amen.**

***Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11***

You are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Silent Reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing*** (choose **one** set for faith sharing at your meeting)

*In his letter to the Church at Corinth, Paul uses the metaphor of building. In his teachings, Jesus often used metaphors to get across to his disciples the nature of our relationship, for example, "I am the vine you are the branches."*

1. Which metaphor gives me the greatest insight into Christ's relationship with his Church?

*At the time Paul is writing to the Corinthians, they are a new Christian community divided into two factions quarreling jealously among themselves.*

1. Do I see lines of division in our community?
2. What metaphor would I use to get across a sense of the present state of our community?

*Paul shepherds the Corinthians away from their meaningless partisanship, "back to basics." He portrays the development of holiness as a work in progress.*

1. What insight do these metaphors give me into how we can continue to grow in holiness, both as individuals and as a faith community?
- 2.

**Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: With the words of St. Paul, let us pray...  
God of Glory, give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we come to know you.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: God of Glory, enlighten our hearts so we may know the hope to which you have called us.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: God of Glory, put your power to work through Christ in us.

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: For what else shall we pray...  
(When all who choose are finished voicing prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

***Closing Prayer***

**All: Gracious God, watch over your people tonight. Bless your Church at \_\_\_\_\_. Make us a visible sign of the reconciling power of your love. Amen.**

**Seek After Wisdom**  
**32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**November 12, 2017**

***Invitation to Prayer***

Leader: Gracious God, bless this Council tonight.

We are your vessels, ready to do your will.  
Give us understanding and wisdom in leading your community here at

\_\_\_\_\_.

Help us to open our ears and our hearts so that we become more like you  
each day.

We ask these things in Jesus' name.

**All: Amen.**

***Scripture Reading: Wisdom 6:12-16***

Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.  
By those who love her she is readily seen,  
and found by those who look for her.  
Quick to anticipate those who desire her, she makes herself know to them.  
Watch for her early and you will have no trouble;  
you will find her sitting at your gates.  
Even to think about her is understanding fully grown;  
be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly leave you..

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***Silent Reflection***

***Questions for Faith Sharing***

1. How can we actively seek out wisdom?
2. What does this scripture passage say are some of the effects of wisdom in our lives?

## **Prayer at the Close of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: As we close our evening gathering, let us ask God to give us a hunger to seek and grow in His wisdom.

**All: God of all Wisdom, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Please offer any needs so that we may pray for them...  
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: God of all Wisdom, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

Leader: God of all Wisdom, we thank you for your generous gifts to us. Keep us safe in your hands and give us the desire to know you better and better.

Let us share a sign of peace with one another.



**Remain In Me...**  
**33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A**  
**November 19, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

*Invitation to Prayer*

**All:           Remain with us as we praise you in all of creation.  
Strengthen us to be co-creators in building our world.  
Grace us with abundant fruitfulness. Amen.**

*Scripture Reading: Psalm 128 (Setting by Nan C. Merrill)*

**All:           Blessed are you who reverence the Beloved,  
who walk in Love's way!**

**Men:          You radiate an inner joy and peace wherever you go;  
compassion draws you to the gates of those in need.**

**Women:       Families and friends gather upon your doorstep;  
children run to greet you with open arms.  
Yes, blessed are you who reverence the Beloved!**

**All:           Strangers feel at home in your presence;  
the oppressed are comforted by your support.  
Blessed indeed are you who reverence the Beloved!  
Peace be with you!**

*Silent Reflection*

*Questions for Faith Sharing*

1. How are we reaching out to the poor and the needy in our community? Are we missing anyone?
2. How can we create new ways of being a community of joy?

## **Prayer at the Close of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: As we gather the fruit of our evening, in deep trust let us bring our prayers to our God...

May compassion always draw us to the gates of those in need, we pray:

**All: God, the Beloved, hear our prayer.**

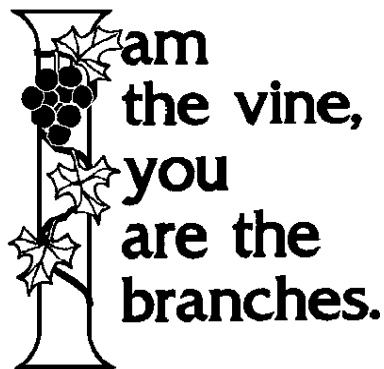
Leader: Please offer any needs so that we may pray for them...  
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)  
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

**All: God, the Beloved, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with us.

Let us share a sign of peace with one another.



**See Christ in all the Poor**  
**The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe**  
**Cycle A**  
**November 26, 2017**

**Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting**

*Invitation to Prayer*

Leader: Lord Jesus, we praise you,  
**All: Lord have mercy.**  
Leader: Christ Jesus, we give thanks for your love,  
**All: Christ have mercy.**  
Leader: Lord Jesus, we rejoice in your life within us,  
**All: Lord have mercy.**

*Scripture Reading: Matthew 25:31-46*

Jesus said to his disciples: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and all the nations will assemble before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." Then the righteous will answer him and say, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?" And the king will say to them in reply, "Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

*Silent Reflection*

*Questions for Faith Sharing*

Deep in our hearts is an impetus to do good in our own small sphere of life and beyond, but everyday demands may keep us more than busy.

1. Despite this reality, how do you try to fulfill your responsibility to some of those in need, beyond your immediate family or friends?
2. What is your favorite charity and how did you choose it? How do you support it?
3. Have you ever experienced a 'nudge' from God to respond in love to someone or some need you had previously neglected?

## **Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting**

### ***Intercessory Prayers***

Leader: Help us to simplify our lives, to know how to distinguish want from need, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: You are ever present to us in our need, let us not be indifferent to the sufferings of others, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Spirit of God, help us to realize the life to which we are called. Guide us to find appropriate ways to advocate on behalf of the powerless, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Heal our communities and homes of violence. Give us the compassion to forgive all who have injured us in any way, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Jesus, you did not call your disciples servants but friends. Help us to build your Kingdom by mutual respect and collaboration, we pray...

**All: Lord, hear our prayer.**

### ***Closing Prayer***

Leader: We praise you, Lord and God, for you are a Shepherd King, who calls us to show your love to those who suffer: the poor, the sick, the lonely, the grieving and those without resources to improve their lives...And so we pray...

**All: Make us instruments of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is discord, union;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light  
and where there is sadness, joy.  
O divine master, grant that we may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love;  
for it is in giving that we receive.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.**

*(Prayer of St. Francis)*